



Tennessee Educator Survey

2020 Overview

A report from the Tennessee Department of Education.



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INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee Educator Survey (TES) is the most important annual survey used to understand the experience of educators across Tennessee.

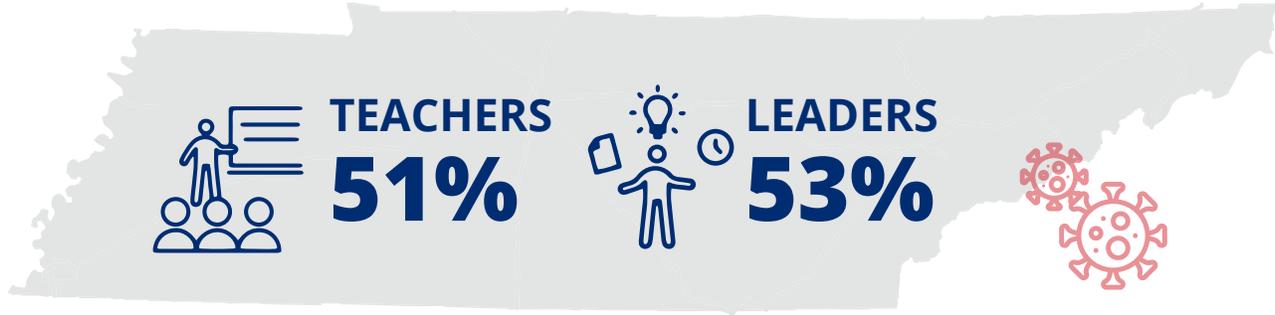
Each year, the Department of Education and Tennessee Education Research Alliance gather this information to ***empower stakeholders and decision-makers across the state to better meet the needs of teachers.***



About the Survey

The TES asks questions to all educators, with additional sections, or “branches,” of questions for specific educator roles (*e.g. pre-K teachers, assistant principals, new teachers*), whose work and experience are important for gaining a deeper understanding of the education landscape in Tennessee. In order to reduce the amount of time each participant takes on the survey, other questions are organized by topic into “modules,” and then provided to a random sample of educators. You can learn more about the survey structure [here](#).

A majority of the teachers (51%) and leaders (53%) in Tennessee participated in the TES.



Despite the need to pause promotion of the TES in March, the middle of the survey window, due to school closures caused by COVID-19, this is great participation. While the crisis may have affected the participation overall, the pause also allowed for the creation of additional questions specific to educator

experiences as a result of the unprecedented school closures and resulting changes to instruction and learning — providing some of the earliest data around Tennessee educators’ experiences amidst the pandemic. The findings from these questions can be found [here](#).

This brief is the first in a series that will highlight some of the statewide findings and trends from the 2020 TES. This brief provides an overview of key results in the three areas of the department’s **Best for All strategic plan** and is the first in a series of four briefs that will be released over the coming month.

Visit the TES website to explore survey results at the state, district, and school-level.

BEST FOR ALL
We will set all students on a path to success

ACADEMICS
ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE

WHOLE CHILD
TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

EDUCATORS
TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND BE THE TOP STATE TO BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER AND LEADER

TN Department of Education

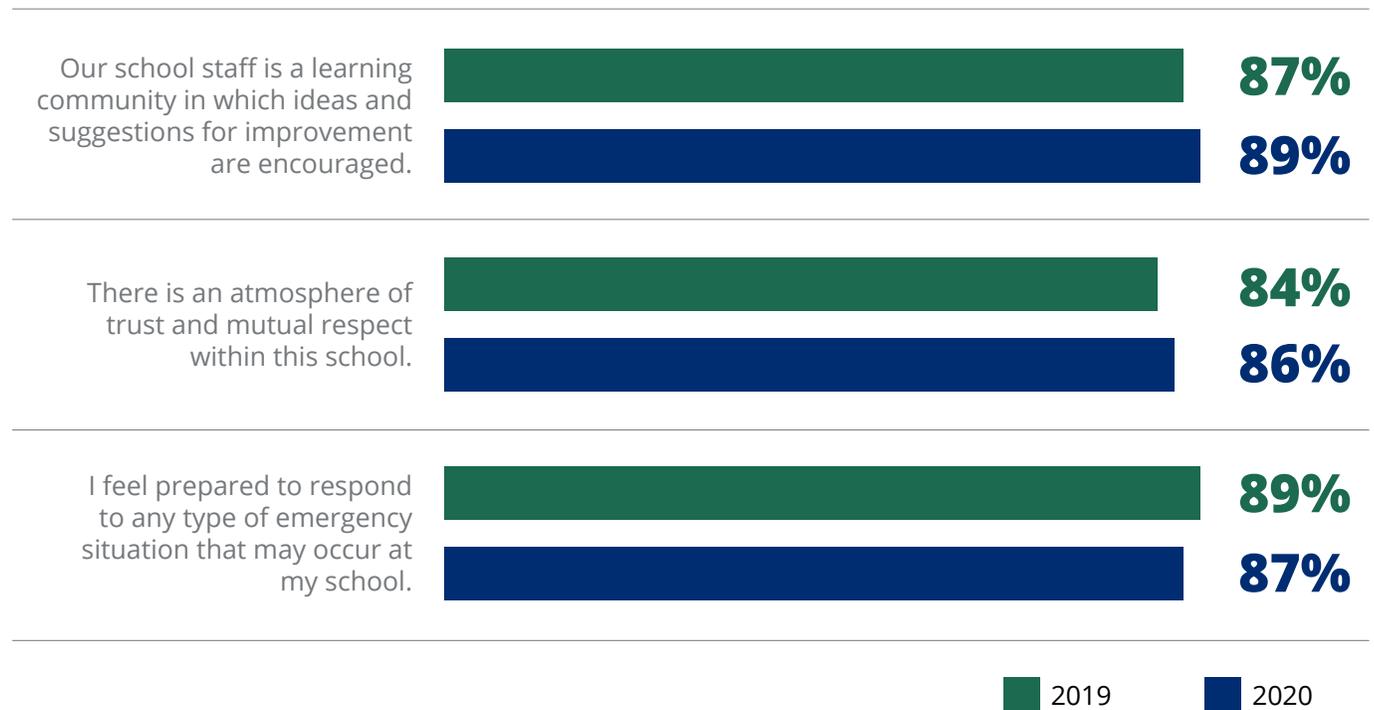
EDUCATORS

Teachers maintained an overall positive perception of school climate

Our state, like the rest of the nation, grappled with unprecedented and abrupt changes to education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic this spring. In the midst of those circumstances, nearly 9 in 10 teachers reported their school communities as learning communities and atmospheres of trust and mutual respect, and a similar percentage reported they felt ready to respond to emergencies.

Even when we compared early (*pre-pandemic*) responses to later (*post-pandemic*) responses within the survey window, we did not see any major changes in these perceptions of school climate. As we head into a historically unpredictable 2020-21 school year, it is encouraging to see that so many teachers maintained overall positive perceptions of their school's climate during the spring events.

Percent Agree/Strongly Agree (Teachers)



Want more? Certain teacher survey questions cluster together to form bigger ideas known as summary measures, such as school climate. This year, the [TES website](#) will begin aggregating the percent of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each of the aligned items and present it as a single summary measure. The value of presenting the data in this way will be that schools can compare their overall climate measure to the rest of their district and districts to the rest of the state. Later briefs will dive deeper into these summary measures to explore their relationship with other outcomes, such as teacher retention.



EDUCATORS

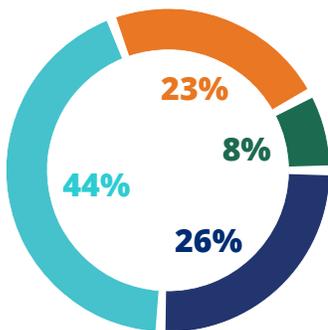
Tennessee will set a new path for the education profession and be the top state to become and remain a teacher and leader

Most teachers believe their principal exhibits instructional leadership

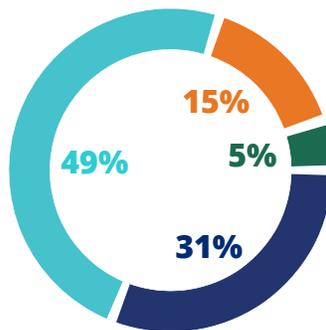
This year, teachers were asked if their principal displays specific instructional leadership characteristics, including modeling instruction, giving feedback, being knowledgeable of curriculum, and being knowledgeable of individual teacher strengths and weaknesses.

Seven in 10 agreed that their principal regularly models effective instruction, and 8 in 10 agreed that their principal displays the other key elements of instructional leadership. Principals themselves also overwhelmingly believed that they see instructional leadership as their primary role (96%) and that their district leadership sees it as their primary role (95%).

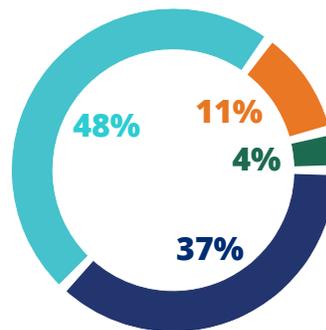
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your principal.



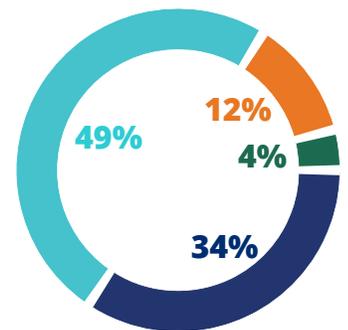
My principal regularly models effective instruction



My principal regularly gives feedback on my instruction



My principal knows my instructional strengths and areas of growth



My principal is knowledgeable about the curricula being used

■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree



Want more?

On the [TES website](#), hovering over many of the questions can show comparisons to previous years. New items and summary measures will have this longitudinal capability next year on the 2021 survey website.

ACADEMICS

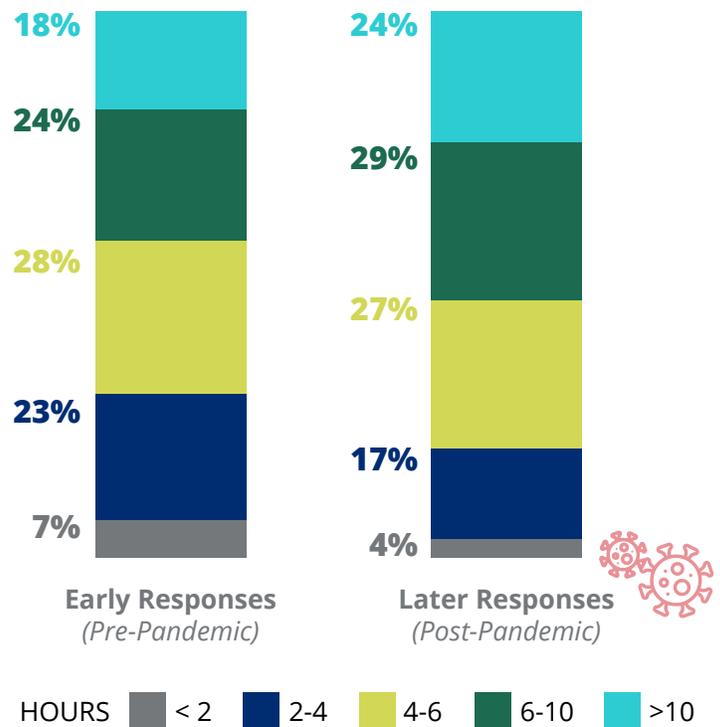
Teachers continue to spend considerable time creating/sourcing their instructional materials

Overall, the amount of time creating/sourcing materials reported by teachers statewide increased slightly in 2020.

Early (pre-pandemic) responders were reporting times that were almost identical to the previous year (42% spending more than 6 hours per week), but later (post-pandemic) responders reported spending considerably more time on average (53% spending more than 6 hours per week).

The increase likely reflects the time investment teachers were making to create, find, or share materials for students to access virtually or digitally during school closures.

Average time spent creating/sourcing materials (*per week*)



Want more?

On the [TES website](#), users can compare responses from teachers of different levels or subject-types, such as TNReady tested subjects vs. non-tested subjects or from different grade bands, including pre-K, K-8, or high school.

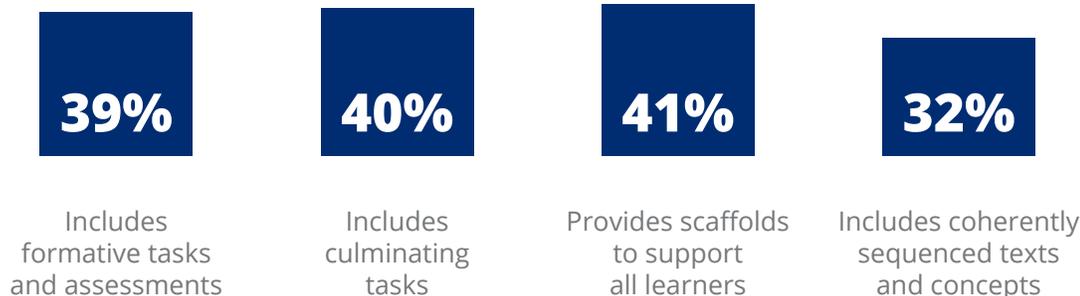


English Language Arts teachers report gaps in their curricula in tasks and support for all learners

To better understand the needs of Tennessee English Language Arts teachers, new questions were added covering curricula, professional learning, collaboration, and the science of reading. One out of ten English teachers reported that their district does not provide ELA curriculum, and, from those who are provided with district ELA curricula, 4 in 10 report that this curriculum lacks the assessments or tasks needed to monitor progress and mastery or lacks the scaffolds to effectively support all learners. Three in 10 report that their current ELA curriculum is NOT coherently sequenced.

Percent Disagree/Strongly Disagree (ELA Teachers)

My ELA curriculum...



Want more?

On the [TES website](#), users can explore role-specific results at the district or state level. For example, from the special education teacher only questions, users can see that the most commonly reported challenges in supporting special education students were implementing behavior plans (43%), differentiating instruction (44%), managing the classroom environment (47%), and lack of collaborative planning time (50%).

WHOLE CHILD

School-based mental health professionals signal a need to improve referral processes

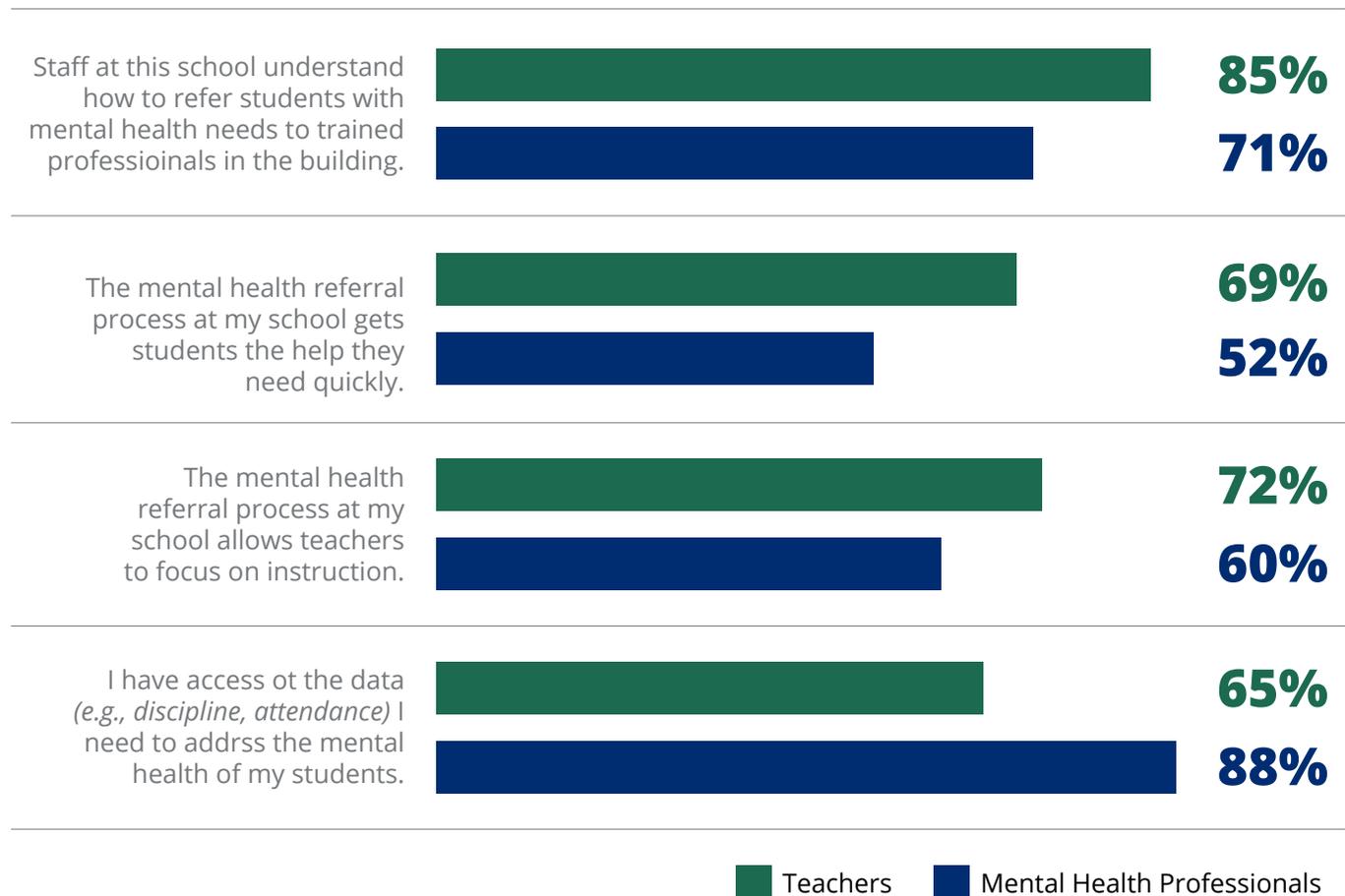
A new group of TES questions were offered to district mental health professionals to better understand their experience and perspective in supporting non-academic needs of students. On average, 88% of mental health professionals report having access to the student data they need, but they have a less favorable view than teachers regarding mental health processes used at school. Only half of mental health professionals agreed that the referral process gets students the help they need quickly.



Want more?

On the [TES website](#), users can explore statewide results on special topics, including Instructional Supports, Professional Learning, Educator Workforce, and Whole Child supports.

Percent of Teachers vs. Mental Health Staff who Agree/Strongly Agree



WHOLE CHILD

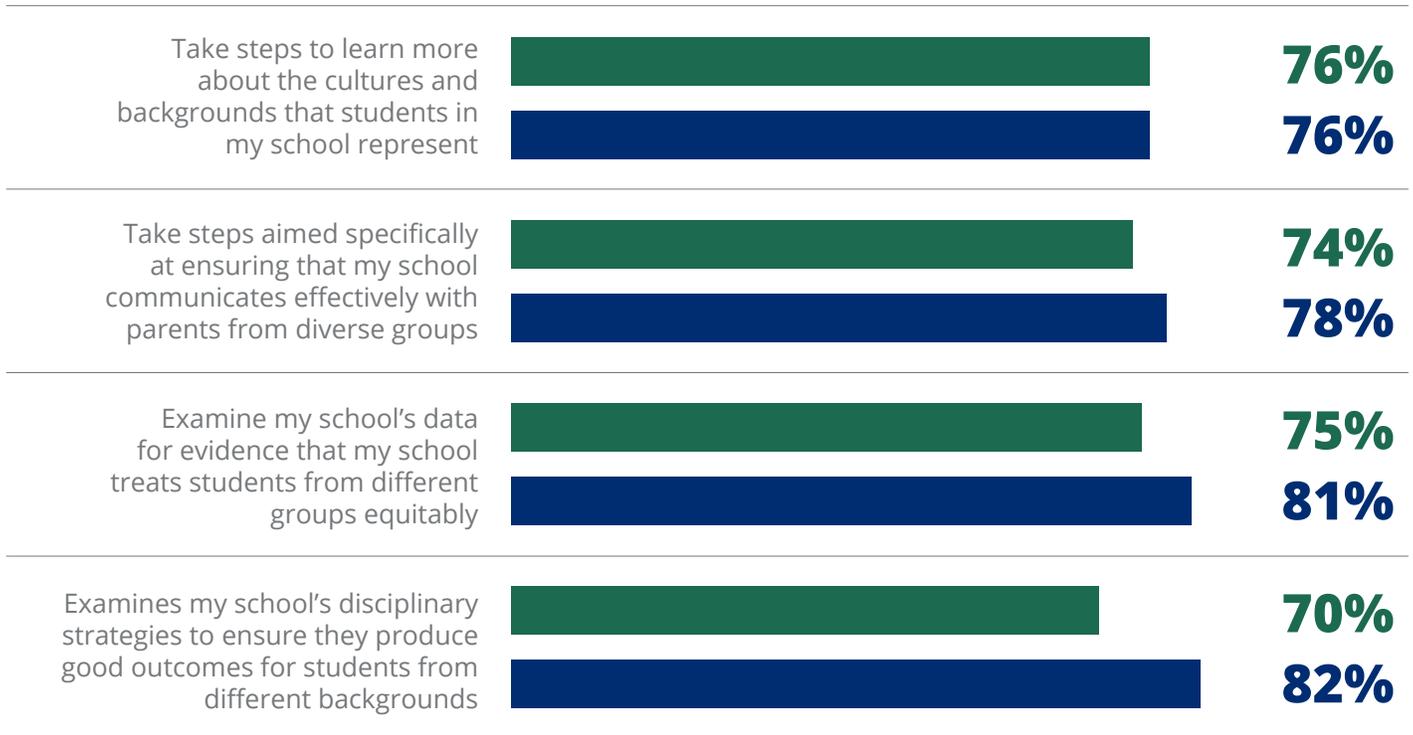
Tennessee public schools will be equipped to serve the academic and non-academic needs of all students



Administrators are working toward equitable disciplinary strategies

In the 2020 TES, administrators in Tennessee were more likely than in the previous year to report that they engaged in specific actions to ensure equity on at least a monthly basis, including a 12% increase in administrators reporting that they regularly examine the disciplinary strategies being used at their school.

Percent of Administrators who engage in each activity at least monthly



2019

2020



Want more? Statewide, 71% of teachers agreed that their school leadership effectively handles discipline and behavioral problems. On the [TES website](#), teacher responses to this and other items are available at the school level compared to the rest of their district or at the district level compared to the rest of the state. Administrator items are available at the district level.



A message from the Tennessee Educator Survey Team

Look for our upcoming briefs focusing on how school and district leaders can support educators in this challenging time.

To the 32,045 teachers, 1,917 administrators, and 3,756 other certified staff who participated in the Tennessee Educator Survey this year, we sincerely thank you. Please continue to make your voice heard and hold us accountable to listen.

To all readers, we thank you for your interest in learning from the perspectives of Tennessee's phenomenal educators. We will continue to update the survey website with additional analyses throughout the summer of 2020.

For any questions on this brief, reach out to Adam Rollins, Senior Research Strategist at the Department of Education, at Adam.Rollins@tn.gov.



About TN Education Research Alliance

TERA brings together Vanderbilt University's Peabody College and the Tennessee Department of Education to create an expanding body of knowledge that directly impacts Tennessee's school improvement strategies. Through TERA, scholars at Vanderbilt and other leading universities carry out high-quality, practical research that informs state-level policy, impacts the practice in schools and districts across Tennessee, and contributes to national conversations on K-12 education. For more information visit, peabody.vanderbilt.edu/TERA.



About Tennessee Department of Education

The Tennessee Department of Education serves the state's nearly one million PK-12 students in 1,800 schools across 147 diverse districts—with both distinct urban and rural populations. As a department, we are dedicated to the goal of dramatically improving student achievement and committed to the belief that children from all backgrounds can succeed when given the opportunities they deserve. For more information, visit tn.gov/education.



About the Best for All Strategic Plan

Tennessee's Best for All strategic plan sets a vision and intention that, together as a state, we will set all students on a path to success. The plan focuses the department's work on three strategic priorities: Academics, Whole Child, and Educators. By taking a comprehensive and coherent approach to providing quality academic programs, serving the whole child, and developing and supporting teachers and leaders, we can ensure Tennessee is the best for all students. For more information, visit bestforallplan.tnedu.gov.



**We will set
all students
on a path
to success.**





tn.gov/education